

Lesson Overview

The ICS Organization: Part I lesson introduces you to the:

- Organizational structure of ICS.
- Five major management functions.
- Principle of span of control.
- Use of position titles.
- Roles and responsibilities of the Incident Commander and Command Staff.

ICS Organization

There is no correlation between the ICS organization and the administrative structure of any single agency or jurisdiction. This is deliberate, because confusion over different position titles and organizational structures has been a significant stumbling block to effective incident management in the past.

For example, FEMA has an Office of Information Technology Services. This office has no relationship to the position of Communication Unit Leader in ICS, which is responsible for the hardware that the ICS organization uses to communicate.

Performance of Management Functions

Every incident or event requires that certain management functions be performed. The problem must be identified and assessed, a plan to deal with it developed and implemented, and the necessary resources procured and paid for.

Regardless of the size of the incident, these management functions still will apply.

Five Major Management Functions

There are five major management functions that are the foundation upon which the ICS organization develops. These functions apply whether you are handling a routine emergency, organizing for a major non-emergency event, or managing a response to a major disaster. The five major management functions are:



Management Function Descriptions

Below is a brief description of each ICS function:

- **Incident Command:** Sets the incident objectives, strategies, and priorities and has overall responsibility at the incident or event.
- **Operations:** Conducts tactical operations to carry out the plan. Develops the tactical objectives and organization, and directs all tactical resources.
- **Planning:** Prepares and documents the Incident Action Plan to accomplish the objectives, collects and evaluates information, maintains resource status, and maintains documentation for incident records.
- **Logistics:** Provides support, resources, and all other services needed to meet the operational objectives.
- **Finance/Administration:** Monitors costs related to the incident. Provides accounting, procurement, time recording, and cost analyses.

Organizational Structure—Incident Commander

On small incidents and events, one person, the Incident Commander, may accomplish all five management functions. In fact, the Incident Commander is the only position that is always staffed in ICS applications. However, large incidents or events may require that these functions be set up as separate Sections within the organization.

Organizational Structure—ICS Sections

Each of the primary ICS Sections may be subdivided as needed. The ICS organization has the capability to expand or contract to meet the needs of the incident.

A basic ICS operating guideline is that the person at the top of the organization is responsible until the authority is delegated to another person. Thus, on smaller incidents when these additional persons are not required, the Incident Commander will personally accomplish or manage all aspects of the incident organization.

ICS Span of Control

Another basic operating guideline concerns the supervisory structure of the organization.

Span of control pertains to the number of individuals or resources that one supervisor can manage effectively during emergency response incidents or special events. Maintaining an effective span of control is particularly important on incidents where safety and accountability are a top priority.

Maintaining Span of Control

Maintaining adequate span of control throughout the ICS organization is very important.

Effective span of control on incidents may vary from three (3) to seven (7), and **a ratio of one (1) supervisor to five (5) reporting elements is recommended.**

If the number of reporting elements falls outside of these ranges, expansion or consolidation of the organization may be necessary. There may be exceptions, usually in lower-risk assignments or where resources work in close proximity to each other.

ICS Position Titles

To maintain span of control, the ICS organization can be divided into many levels of supervision. At each level, individuals with primary responsibility positions have distinct titles. Using specific ICS position titles serves three important purposes:

- Titles provide a common standard for all users. For example, if one agency uses the title Branch Chief, another Branch Manager, etc., this lack of consistency can cause confusion at the incident.
- The use of distinct titles for ICS positions allows for filling ICS positions with the most qualified individuals rather than by seniority.
- Standardized position titles are useful when requesting qualified personnel. For example, in deploying personnel, it is important to know if the positions needed are Unit Leaders, clerks, etc.

Supervisory Position Titles

The titles for all supervisory levels of the organization are shown in the table below.

Organizational Level	Title	Support Position
Incident Command	Incident Commander	Deputy
Command Staff	Officer	Assistant
General Staff (Section)	Chief	Deputy
Branch	Director	Deputy
Division/Group	Supervisor	N/A
Unit	Leader	Manager
Strike Team/Task Force	Leader	Single Resource Boss

ICS Organizational Components

Sections: The organizational levels with responsibility for a major functional area of the incident (e.g., Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance/Administration). The person in charge of each Section is designated as a Chief.

Divisions: Used to divide an incident geographically. The person in charge of each Division is designated as a Supervisor.

Groups: Used to describe functional areas of operations. The person in charge of each Group is designated as a Supervisor.

Branches: Used when the number of Divisions or Groups extends the span of control. Can be either geographical or functional. The person in charge of each Branch is designated as a Director.

Task Forces: A combination of mixed resources with common communications operating under the direct supervision of a Task Force Leader.

ICS Organizational Components (continued)

Strike Teams: A set number of resources of the same kind and type with common communications operating under the direct supervision of a Strike Team Leader.

Single Resources: May be individuals, a piece of equipment and its personnel complement, or a crew or team of individuals with an identified supervisor that can be used at an incident.

Incident Commander's Overall Role

The Incident Commander has overall responsibility for managing the incident. The Incident Commander must be fully briefed and should have a written delegation of authority. Initially, assigning tactical resources and overseeing operations will be under the direct supervision of the Incident Commander.

Personnel assigned by the Incident Commander have the authority of their assigned positions, even if it's not the same authority that they have at home.

Incident Commander Responsibilities

In addition to having overall responsibility for managing the entire incident, the Incident Commander:

- Has responsibility for ensuring incident safety, providing information services to internal and external stakeholders, and establishing and maintaining liaison with other agencies participating in the incident.
- May have one or more Deputies from the same agency or from other agencies or jurisdictions. Deputy Incident Commanders must be as qualified as the Incident Commander.

Selecting and Changing Incident Commanders

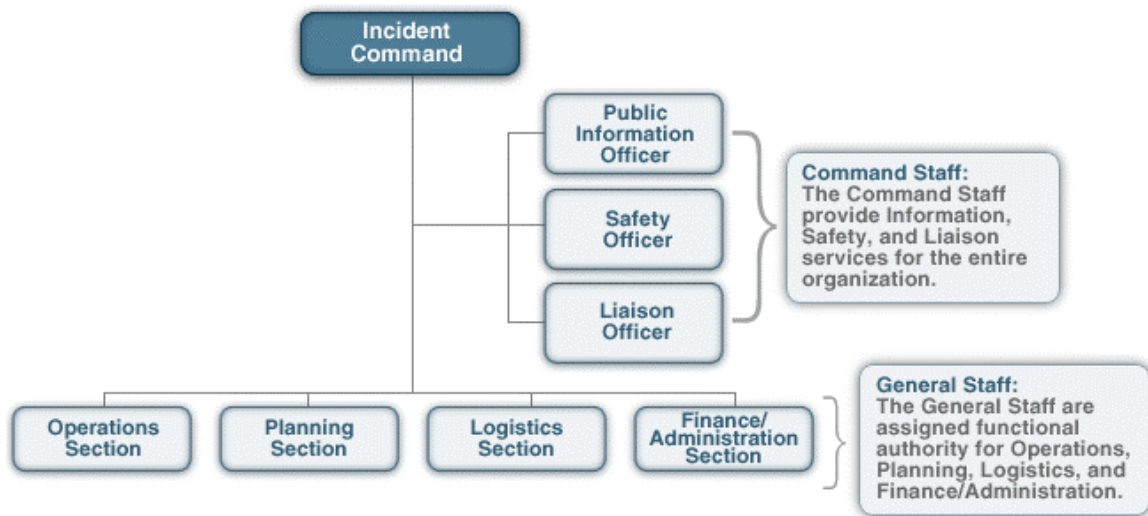
As incidents expand in size, change in jurisdiction or discipline, or become more complex, command may change to a more experienced Incident Commander.

Rank, grade, and seniority are not the factors used to select the Incident Commander. The Incident Commander is always a highly qualified individual trained to lead the incident response.

Transfer of command at an incident always requires that there be a full briefing for the incoming Incident Commander and notification to all personnel that a change in command is taking place.

Expanding the Organization

As incidents grow, the Incident Commander may delegate authority for performance of certain activities to the Command Staff and the General Staff.



Command Staff

Depending upon the size and type of incident or event, it may be necessary for the Incident Commander to designate personnel to provide information, safety, and liaison services for the entire organization. In ICS, these personnel make up the Command Staff and consist of the:

- **Public Information Officer**, who serves as the conduit for information to internal and external stakeholders, including the media or other organizations seeking information directly from the incident or event.
- **Safety Officer**, who monitors safety conditions and develops measures for assuring the safety of all assigned personnel.
- **Liaison Officer**, who serves as the primary contact for supporting agencies assisting at an incident.